



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Press Release

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Environmental Protection Chief to Sample New River for World Water Monitoring Day Celebration

SACRAMENTO - Terry Tamminen, Secretary of California's Environmental Protection Agency, will take environmental samples and conduct analysis of the health of the New River at the Brawley wetlands in honor of World Water Monitoring Day and to call attention to pollution of the New River.

This event is part of World Water Monitoring observances in California, the United States and throughout the World. Secretary Tamminen is joining local watershed groups, volunteers, students, and other interested environmental organizations and businesses, in a worldwide water quality monitoring and data collection effort. Pete Silva, vice chair of the State Water Resources Control Board, and Leon Lesicka, a member of the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board, will join Tamminen.

"I'm here today because the New River is an important waterway in the Salton Sea watershed. It is used by California and Baja California as an agricultural drain that makes farming possible in a desert," Tamminen said. "Urban growth and agricultural activities have significantly contributed to pollution in the river, so we need to work together to protect and clean its waters for a mutual benefit. The wetlands are an example of the positive steps that can be taken to improve the conditions in the New River."

World Water Monitoring Day is an outgrowth of the first National Water Monitoring Day in 2002, during which more than 75,000 Americans participated in monitoring events and educational programs. World Water Monitoring Day is sponsored by America's Clean Water Foundation and the International Water Association, the U.S. EPA, and supported by the State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards.

World Water Monitoring Day serves as an educational opportunity for watershed groups, and trained volunteers and educators to build and support watershed stewardship through citizen involvement in monitoring and collection of data on the health of our watersheds. After water samples are taken and several simple analyses are made, citizen volunteers (including the Secretary) will enter the results of their monitoring into an international database of the world's water quality.

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Celebration
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Culmination of the monitoring will be the celebration of World Water Monitoring Day on Oct. 18.

In the 1980s, after the extent of the contamination was determined, Mexico and the United States began working to address the problem, through upgrades to Mexicali's sewage systems, increasing capacity at wastewater treatment plants and recently through industrial wastewater monitoring. In June 2004, the U.S. EPA contributed \$13 million toward building a new wastewater treatment plant in Mexicali. When construction is finished, the plant will be able to treat two million gallons per day of raw sewage, which will reduce discharges into the New River.

The New River originates in Mexicali, Baja California and flows north across the California-Mexico border into California, through the City of Calexico and Imperial County before emptying into the Salton Sea. It is approximately 60 miles long, with two-thirds of its length in California.

The sampling will take place at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, October 14th at the Brawley Wetlands.